

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

DECEMBER '83

Nº 86



PLANTS OF THE CASTLEMAINE DISTRICT—a series.

by Rita Mills

BRUNONIA AUSTRALIS

Blue Pincushions

In flower Nov-Dec.

One of the loveliest blue flowers in the local bush, I think, its colour ranges from almost pink to a blue that is close to cobalt. The reason for the common name becomes obvious immediately, as the yellow tipped stigmas look like so many pins in an azure cushion.

The 16- 30cm stem is covered with fine, white tightly pressed hairs and the one I used as a specimen has a joint, similar to that in a grass stem, about half way up the stem. The rather thick leaves have a covering of fine hairs, too, mostly on the backs. Brunonia is a family and genus all on its own, having no known relatives,

If you've never seen them and feel like giving yourself a treat, make a point in going into the bush in the next few days. There are still quite a number in Kalimna.



by Terry Collins.

DRAGONS

These belong to the family 'Agamidae' comprising of about 55 species Australia. Again diverse, they are all egg layers, mainly diurnal and insectivores. They range from only a few centimetres long, such as the Earless Dragons of arid areas, to the spectacular Water Dragons which can exceed a metre in length.

Techniques for finding dragons will vary with habitat. Many desert species utilize burrows for shelter. But, as dragons are in general very active, seeking prey such as insects, they can be seen scampering between bushes, or in the early morning sitting by burrow entrances letting the sun warm them. Sharp eyes are the key to seeing these animals.

The best known desert burrower is the Netted Dragon, with its net pattern on the back, blunt snout, and short, powerful limbs. The much larger Bearded Dragon or Jew Lizard, is found in many habitats and there are several closely related species. In Northern Australia the best known large dragon is the Frilled Lizard featured on our two cent coin.

The wide frill of these lizards is used to intimidate potential predators and for temperature regulation. In eastern Australia several species live near water the most notable being the Water Dragon. In rocky areas especially in arid and semi-arid areas, many dragon species have evolved to a life in rock crevices. These highly coloured lizards make spectacular colours and displays in the Spring.

No discussion would be complete without mention of the Thorny Devil, "Moloch horridus", a weird, arid dwelling, ant eating lizard, covered with spines, bumps and humps. Although quite common, this lizard is rarely seen as it moves slowly and is well camouflaged. It feeds on ants- up to 200 at a sitting!



GECKOES

The second biggest Australian lizard family is 'Gekkonidae'

the Geckoes, with more than 60 known species. These delightful lizards are nocturnal insect eaters. All have thin almost translucent skin, delicate limbs and often large heads with big eyes. These eyes commonly have slit pupils so that the gecko can see at night. Gecko species are adapted to nearly every habitat. Most are small, ranging from 3cm to the largest of 20cm including the tail, and nearly all have interesting patterns of colour. The best way to see them is to walk around suitable habitats at night with a bright torch looking

for small moving objects. Areas heavily denuded by stock are usually unproductive. Some geckoes can be found in their diurnal rest places. Spinifex being a good habitat, especially for the minute, but beautiful Jewelled Gecko. However, by pulling the bush apart causing such habitat destruction is hardly justified. Several very common species shelter under small flat rocks such as the Dtella and Binoes Gecko, and are found in virtually every habitat. Some geckoes of the genus 'Nephr' are found in virtually every habitat. Some geckoes are burrowers, including the large, robust geckoes of the genus 'Nephrurus'. These usually occupy arid environments. In common with many geckoes they will emit hisses or even high pitched squeaks when molested. Like all geckoes they are egg layers

"MOUNT FRANKLIN GORGE"

The title is rather a contradiction, but the outing was a delight, even if a little strenuous!

A group from the Maryborough club joined us for this outing, and about 6 carloads headed off for our first stop at Dry Diggings Forest Reserve just north of Mt Franklin, where we spent about three quarters of an hour. The vegetation was similar to that at Glenluce. From there we turned north down a rather narrow track til we decided we could go no further and stopped for a 'cuppa' before following the rather wide gully bottom for a kilometre or so. It was wide and damp, but suddenly dropped steeply and narrowly away into a rocky gorge.

Several decided they were game enough and energetic enough to climb down into the gorge, but the others decided to stay on top and enjoy the birds and flowers up there. The climb down was well worth the trouble, as the walls and bottom was a garden of ferns, including Maidenhair and Necklace fern, and wild violets. It was generally agreed that they were Ivy-leaf violet, though they were quite tiny.

We finally climbed out of this cool, moist gorge at its junction with a smaller one, up its steep side to its very dry top, where we found lots of Musky Caledenias. The area was similar to where the Flying Duck Orchids are found at Glenluce, but despite a careful search none were found.

This gorge was found last year by the group who went on the all day walk, and it was well worth re-visiting during a good year.

THE BALLAD OF THE EMEU.

BY BRET HARTE.



SAY, have you
seen at the Wil-
lows so green—
So charm-
ing and
rurally
true—
A singular
bird, with a man-
ner absurd,

Which they call the Australian Emeu?

Have you
Ever seen this Australian Emeu?

It trots all around with its head on the ground,
Or erects it quite out of your view;
And the ladies all cry, when its figure they spy,
"O, what a sweet pretty Emeu!"

Oh! do
Just look at that lovely Emeu!"

One day to this spot, when the weather was hot,
Came Matilda Hortense Fortescue;
And beside her there came a youth of high name—
Augustus Florell Montague:

The two
Both loved that wild foreign Emeu.



With two loaves of bread then they fed it, instead
Of the flesh of the white cockatoo,
Which once was its food in that wild neighbour-
hood

Where ranges the sweet kangaroo;
That too
Is game for the famous Emeu!

Old saws and gimlets but its appetite whet
Like the world-famous bark of Peru;
There's nothing so hard that the bird will dis-
card,
And nothing its taste will eschew,
That you
Can give that long-legged Emeu!

The time slipped away in this innocent play,
When up jumped the bold Montague:



"Where's that specimen pin that I gaily did win
In raffle, and gave unto you,
Fortescue?"
No word spoke the guilty Emeu!

"Quick! tell me his name whom thou gavest that
same,
Ere these hands in thy blood I imbrue!"
"Nay, dearest," she cried as she clung to his
side,
"I'm innocent as that Emeu!"
"Adieu!"
He replied, "Miss M. H. Fortescue!"

Down she dropped at his feet, all as white as a
sheet,
As wildly he fled from her view;
He thought 'twas her sin—for he knew not the
pin
Had been gobbled up by the Emeu;
All through
The voracity of that Emeu!

BOTANICAL NOTES OF A TRIP TO MILDURA.

By H. B. WILLIAMSON.

(Read before the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, 14th July, 1913.)

After crossing by the Mildura punt, and bearing a little to the east, a belt of sand-ridge is entered, on which much interesting vegetation appears. The track is of red sand, and where it is sloping it is difficult for bike riding; but on level stretches the sand is bound by brick-red clay, identical with what pedestrians in the streets of Mildura have, after rain, to scrape off their boots. The red track winding among the trees, bordered with dark green herbage, sprinkled with white daisies and *Blennodias*, formed a pretty picture. The daisies comprised *Brachycome pachyptera*, Hard-head Daisy, and *Helipterum cotula*, Mayweed Sunray; but *Blennodia lasiocarpa*, Hairy Blennodia, white, with a tinge of pink and blue, formed a dense carpet in places. In every direction a distant view of the ground through the spaces between the trees reminded one of a snow scene, only wanting corresponding touches on the pine boughs to make the illusion complete. The herbage consisted otherwise of *Helipterum moschatum*, Musk Sunray, *Alyssum minimum*, Desert Alyssum, and several species of *Zygophyllum*—*Z. iodocarpum*, Violet Twinleaf, *Z. ammophilum*, Sand Twinleaf, *Z. crenatum*, Notched Twinleaf, and *Z. glaucescens*, Pale Twinleaf. Less abundant were *Millotia tenuifolia*, Soft Millotia, *Senecio brachyglossus*, Slender Senecio, *Parietaria debilis*, Forest Pellitory, *Poranthera microphylla*, Small-leaved Poranthera, *Calandrina calyptrata*, Pink Purslane, *Polycarpon tetraphyllum*, Four-leaved Allseed, *Stenopetalum lineare*, Narrow Thread-petal, *Craspedia pleiocephala*, Small Buttons, *Lappula concava*, Slender Burr-weed, and *Lepidium papillosum*, Warty Peppercress. The trees and shrubs represented were, besides the small eucalypts, *Eucalyptus bicolor*, Blackbox, and another, probably *E. hemiphloia*, Grey-box, *Myoporum platycarpum*, known locally as "Sandalwood," and *Callitris robusta*, Murray Pine or Marong. All reached a height of 50 or 60 feet. The pines are fine, symmetrical trees, and give to these sand-ridges their character and name, "Pine Ridges." The settlers at Mildura use the timber for posts for vine-trellises—I suppose on account of its white-ant-resistant properties. Boat-loads of pine posts from groves some miles up the river were being unloaded at Merbein, near the pumping plant. Among the pines a few small trees of *Eremophila oppositifolia*, Twin-leaved Emu-bush, in full bloom, with large, white, tocoma-like flowers stood out as real ornaments, and *Hakea leucoptera*, Needle Hakea, *H. vittata*, Striped Hakea, showing fruit sparsely, and *Exocarpus aphylla*, Leafless Ballart, with its tangled branchlets, added interest to the pine-groves. The last four named reached a height of 12 feet. *Grevillea Huegelii*, Comb Grevillea, with its rigid, spiny foliage, was seen frequently, but not bearing flowers. The Casuarinas noted were *C. lepidophloia*, Belar, and another, probably *C. Luehmanni*, without flowers or fruit.

6
from the Roadsides Conservation Committee -

Leasing of Land Adjacent to Roadsides for Conservation Purposes.

Notes of a talk to members of the Roadsides Conservation Committee by Mr. G. Stone. Environmentas Studies Section, (R.C.A.)

Before the beginning of each financial year (usually in the Feb-Mar period) officers of the R.C.A. and the Ministry of Conservation conduct a review of the coming year's works program. The purpose of the review is to determine whether or not projects have adverse environmental or social effects. If projects are considered to have adverse effects then ways and means are sought to overcome or minimise the problems. Changing the design and/or carrying out planting can be two simple ways of doing this.

The review applies to all roads where funds have been directed by the R.C.A. It includes local roads (unclassified roads) where municipalities have sought and received funds for works from the R.C.A.. (See Australian Road Research, Vol. 10, No.2, June 1980. R.E.Saunders, Procedures Adopted by the Country Roads Board in the Environmental Review of Works Program p.p. 31 -34 for an account of the R.C.A.'s environmental review procedures).

The review has indicated several instances where leasing of strips of land adjacent to roadsides has appeared to be a feasible way of overcoming difficulties.

One example is the reconstruction of the Bendigo-Sutton Grange Road. This road is a declared main road in the Shire of Metcalfe. It is a one chain (20 m) road and the length in question was framed by a canopy of eucalypts.

Concern was expressed locally about the extent of clearing that appeared to be necessary. An inspection of the road was arranged by the Divisional Engineer with the Metcalfe Shire Engineer. It was obvious that no low impact solution would meet the requirements of safety and the convenience for traffic. The Shire Engineer was appreciative of the need to restrict clearing to one side of the road only, wherever practicable.

Consideration was given to purchasing or leasing a strip of land adjacent to the road reserve to allow regeneration of the roadside vegetation thus restoring the roadside character. Subsequently a "gentlemen's agreement" was reached whereby a 6 metre strip of land was leased from the adjacent landowner for a nominal sum of \$500 over 10 years. At the end of the ten years the revegetated strip will be returned to the management of the owner.

7

As part of the agreement the Shire provided an electric fence and attempted to revegetate the area with river red gums and white gums.

The leasing of the land for conservation purposes presents many difficulties apart from the problems with revegetation described above. Changes in ownership or use of the property may adversely affect the vegetation, but long term leases may not readily be negotiated. With a "gentlemen's agreement" nominal rental lease the arrangement may not be secure enough to warrant worthwhile expenditure and effort.

The use of covenants, easements or compulsory acquisition for conservation purposes could be looked at as alternatives to leasing, subject to identification and solution of the legal problems involved.

The R.C.A. is taking a step in the right direction in recognising and catering for the conservation and regeneration of roadside vegetation as part of its annual review.



Also from the Committee is a request for nominations for

Roadside Environment Awards, which "are made for projects which demonstrate sympathetic treatment of roads and roadsides within their environment".

There are four categories - natural environment (which is divided into two subdivisions, broadly speaking, one professional and one amateur), historic or cultural environment, projects which promote the interest and enjoyment of the road user, and use of private land.

Mr. John Hawker, Project Officer for the Register of Significant Trees, has prepared a list of trees which are on the Register and are located on roadside reserves. The list includes Classified and Recorded trees. Copies of this list are available from the Roadsides Conservation Committee, c/- Ministry for Conservation, P.O. Box 41, East Melbourne 3002.

CLUB PROGRAMME

MEETINGS

- December Friday 9 - Christmas Breakup. Members and Visitors night.
This is an opportunity for members and others to show some
of their special nature slides (up to about 20), or
bring along a favourite nature story or collection. Its our night,
bring along a favourite story or co
bring along a favourite nature story or collection. Its
our night, let's make it special.
SUPPER - Please bring a plate of goodies!
There is no Business Meeting for December.
- January Thursday 27 - Business Meeting. 7.30pm, Ed. Centre.
- February Friday 10 - ANNUAL MEETING. Speaker, Prof. John Turner.
Thursday 23 - Business meeting. Ed Centre.
- March Friday 9 - Geoff Sitch, Propagation.
Thursday 22 - Business Meeting. Ed. Centre.

OUTINGS

- December None.
- February Saturday 11, Bells Swamp and Laanacoorie.
Leave S.E.C. 1.30 sharp.
- March Saturday 10 - Lyonville and Wombat Forest.
Leader, Stan Bruton. Leave S.E.C. 1.30pm.

General Meetings are held at the High School in Lawson Pde.
The meeting starts at 8 pm but the rooms are open about 20 minutes
before that. There is supper afterwards, and some more mugs would
be handy.

Business meetings are held in the Education Centre , starting at 7
7.30pm. These meeting are open to all members.

COMMITTEE

President	Mr G. Broadway	Ph 72 2513
Hon. Sec.	Mrs S. Bruton	Ph 72 3050
Treasurer	Mr F. Meyer	Ph 72 1958
Editor	Mrs R. Mills	-

Articles for the magazine may be left at Tonks Bros, 224 Barkers St.

THE COMMITTEE WISHES ALL MEMBERS A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A NEW YEAR
FULL OF INTERESTING NEW FINDS AND SIGHTINGS!